APPLE COMICS

Robert Asprin and Ken & Beth Mitchroney

WARP GRAPHICS

Myth Conceptions™

No. 5
$1.95
$2.60 in Canada

BACK TO NO FUTURE

Our Story So Far. . .

In the dimension of Klah, young Skeeve became apprentice to the wizard Garkin. One day, Garkin transported a fellow magician from the dimension of Perv, the "demon" Aahz, to Klah. As a prank, Garkin put a spell on Aahz which removed his powers. But before Garkin could remove the spell, he was murdered.

So Skeeve became apprentice to Aahz, who, even though powerless, still retained all his knowledge of magik. Together, they tracked down Isstvan, the magician behind Garkin's murder.

Along the way they enlisted the aid of the dull-witted demon hunter, Quigley, and visited Deva, site of an interdimensional bazaar, where they met Tananda, the beautiful assassin/magician. It was also at Deva that Skeeve adopted his pet dragon, Gleep (or was it the other way around?).

Afterwards, Aahz and Skeeve took over Isstvan's former base of operations, an old country inn, to continue Skeeve's education.

But Aahz's greed got in the way and after two successive get-rich-quick schemes backfired, they found themselves poorer than ever, with the inn on the verge of bankruptcy.

Things began looking up, however, when Skeeve was summoned to apply to become magician to the court of King Rodrick the Fifth of Possiltum. They decided to stage a role reversal — Aahz posing as the apprentice while he taught Skeeve to act like a powerful sorcerer.

Arriving in Possiltum, Aahz shrewdly gained the favor of King Rodrick's Chancellor, J.R. Grimble, who controlled the purse strings in the kingdom. On Grimble's advice, King Rodrick gave Skeeve the job. But Skeeve's first assignment called for real magikal skills: stop the army approaching from the north — or die trying.

Even worse, General Badaxe, Commander of the Royal Armies of Possiltum (and Grimble's chief rival), didn't want competition from magicians — he gave orders to his troops that, even if Aahz and Skeeve succeeded, they were not to return to Possiltum alive!

After sneaking behind enemy lines, our heroes realized there was no way they could stop the army by themselves. Luckily for them, Tananda (Tanda to her friends) showed up with a D-hopper, which enabled them to return to the bazaar on Deva. There, while Aahz went looking for an army of mercenaries they could afford, Skeeve, quite by accident, recruited a raggedy bunch of misfits and has-beens who were willing to work for next-to-nothing. When Aahz returned empty-handed and discovered what Skeeve had done, he was a trifle, um, upset . . .

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Myth Conceptions™

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KID, YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO!
BACK TO NO FUTURE
ARTFULLY ADAPTED by BETH & KEN MITCHRONEY
SKETCHES & SCRIBBLES by KEN MITCHRONEY
LUXURIOUS LETTERS by GARY FIELDS
INGENIOUS EDITS by RICHARD PINI

the Yellow Crescent Inn
OVER 60 BILLION SERVED
AND IT BETTER BE GOOD!
AAHZ, YOU MEAN YOU AND TANDA DIDN'T HIRE ANY MERCENARIES?
CREEEK
NO, I DIDN'T! THEY WANTED ME TO PAY THEIR BAR BILL AS PART OF THE CONTRACT! THEY'RE BANDITS! I DID THE BEST I COULD-- AND I GOT NOWHERE. I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU DO BETTER!
HE ALREADY HAS! WHILE YOU WERE WASTING TIME, SKEEVE HERE HAS HIRED HIMSELF A FIGHTING TEAM!
ZIP!
BROCKHURST!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
WAITING FOR ORDERS IN THE UPCOMING CAMPAIGN!
2

WHAT CAMPAIGN?

THE ONE ON KLAH, OF COURSE.

HAVEN'T YOU TOLD HIM YET, BOSS?

BOSS?

BOSS!?!

NO NEED TA SHOUT! WE HEAR YA PLAIN ENOUGH!

SHOVE!

AJAX!

TANDA! EASY, GIRL! NONE OF YOUR ATHLETIC GREETINGS! I'M NOT AS YOUNG AS I USED TA BE, YA KNOW!

POP!

YOU OLD FRAUD! YOU'LL OUT-LIVE US ALL!

THAT KINDA DEPENDS ON HOW GOOD A GENERAL THE YOUNGSTER IS...

KID--I WANT TO TALK TO YOU! NOW!

I KNOW THAT TEMPER!

GUS!

IN THE STONE! ARE *YOU* IN ON THIS EXPEDITION? THE BOSS DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT WORKING WITH PERVERTS!

THAT'S PERVECT!

SHEESH!

TANDA! PLEASE TELL ME AGAIN ABOUT HOW THE KID CAN STAY OUT OF TROUBLE!

UMM... AAHZ Z COULD I TALK TO YOU FOR A MINUTE Z PRIVATELY Z

WHY, I THINK THAT'S AN EXCELLENT IDEA-- BOSS!

YAG!

SHLOOONK!

ROW 21

ROW 2

I DIDN'T EXACTLY *HIRE* THEM! ACTUALLV, I WAS JUST TELLING BROCKHURST WHV I WAS AT THE BAZAAR, AND THEN ONE BY ONE THEY ALL THOUGHT I *WAS* HIRING THEM!

ROW 210
"FOR THE GIRL WHO HAS EVERYTHING"
PENICILLIN
STOP BY TODAY!

KID! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU? THIS IS THE *BAZAAR* AT *DEVA*! YOU'VE *GOT* TO BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY AND TO WHOM-- ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE'S *MONEY* INVOLVED!

W 21

ROW

poink poink

BUT I *TOLD* THEM NOTHING WAS DEFINITE UNTIL WE FOUND OUT IF *YOU* HAD FOUND SOME-ONE ELSE!

21

ROW 2

BUT I *DIDN'T*. SO *NOW* THE DEAL IS *FINAL*.

CAN'T WE GET OUT OF IT?

BACK OUT OF A DEAL ON *DEVA*?

THAT WOULD GET US BARRED FROM THE BAZAAR SO FAST IT WOULD MAKE YOUR HEAD SPIN. REMEMBER, THE *MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION* RUNS THIS DIMENSION!

ROW 2

WELL, YOU *SAID* YOU WANTED OUTSIDE HELP.

I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GO *THAT* FAR OUTSIDE! AN IMP, A SENILE ARCHER, AND A GARGOYLE!

SLOOMPH!

..AND A SALAMANDER!

FWANG!

ROW 2

TUGGA TUGGA TUGGA

GUS IS STILL BUMMING AROUND WITH BERFERT? *THAT'S* A PLUS!

FUDD!

THE ONLY *REALLY* UNCERTAIN FACTOR IS THE GREMLIN!

BONK!

HOW DO YOU FIGURE THAT?

WELL, HE'S BEEN FOLLOWING AJAX. THE QUESTION IS, *WHY?* AND WILL HE FOLLOW US TO *KLAH?*

GREMLINS...

THERE ARE NO *SUCH THINGS* AS GREMLINS..

KID, I'VE I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE.

BUT, AAHZ, I *SAW* HIM!

POW!

DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU, KID. AFTER A DAY LIKE YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU SAW A *JABBERWOCKY!*

WHAT'S A--

HEY YOU GUYS!

IS EVERYTHING SET?

ZIP

ROWZT

ZOWZI

ABOUT AS SET AS WE'LL EVER BE. THOUGH IF YOU WANT MY *HONEST* OPINION, WITH A CREW LIKE THIS, WE'RE SET MORE FOR A *ZOO* THAN A *WAR*.

ITS OK I'M WITH THE BAND

AAHZ IS A BIT *CRITICAL* OF MY CHOICE IN RECRUITS.

WHAT'S YOUR GRIPE, AAHZ? I THOUGHT YOU AND GUS WERE OLD FOX-HOLE BUDDIES!

I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT *GUS*--OR *BERFERT* EITHER. THAT LITTLE LIZARD'S *TERRIFIC* UNDER FIRE!

WELL, *I* CAN VOUCH FOR AJAX. DON'T LET HIS AGE FOOL YOU. I'D RATHER HAVE *HIM* BACKING MY MOVE THAN A WHOLE *COMPANY* OF *COUNTERFEIT* ARCHERS.

IS HE *REALLY* FROM ARCHIA?

RASH

THE TASTE WORTH KILLING FOR *PILLAGE INN PIES*

A HUN-EV OF A PIE!

9

THAT'S WHAT HE'S SAID AS LONG AS *I'VE* KNOWN HIM, AND AFTER SEEING HIM SHOOT, I'VE GOT *NO REASON* TO DOUBT IT. WHY?

I'VE NEVER MET A GENUINE *ARCHER* BEFORE. FOR A WHILE, I WAS WILLING TO BELIEVE THE WHOLE *DIMENSION* WAS A LEGEND. WELL, IF HE CAN SHOOT HALF AS WELL AS ARCHERS ARE SUPPOSED TO, *I'VE* GOT NO GRIPES ABOUT HAVING HIM ON THE TEAM.

THE *IMP* IS ANOTHER STORY. I'M NOT WILD ABOUT WORKING WITH *ANY* IMP, BUT TO HIRE ONE WITHOUT POWERS IS A WASTE OF GOOD MONEY!

DON'T FORGET, HE'S AN *ASSASSIN!* POWERS OR NO POWERS, I'LL BET WE FIND A USE FOR HIM. WHEN WE WERE TALKING WITH THE GREMLIN JUST NOW--

NOW DON'T *YOU* START ON THAT!

START ON *WHAT?*

!?!

THE *GREMLIN* BIT! *ANY* HALF-WIT KNOWS THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS *GREMLINS!*

DO YOU WANT TO TELL *HIM* THAT? HE'S ON YOUR...

MY *WHAT!?!*

BLEEP!

OH, *RATS!* HE'S GONE AGAIN!

IF YOU'RE QUITE THROUGH, WE'D BEST GET MOVING. THERE'S A WAR WAITING FOR US, YOU KNOW!

OOPS! THAT REMINDS ME...

HEY!

THERE IT IS!

IT'S A D:

BUST!

SNAP

HERE, AAHZ.

IT'S THE SAME ONE YOU GAVE ISSTVAN. I LIFTED IT FROM HIM WHEN WE PARTED COMPANY. YOU'LL PROBABLY WANT TO UNDO WHATEVER YOU DID TO THE CONTROLS BEFORE YOU USE IT, THOUGH.

A D-HOPPER!

IF I CAN REMEMBER FOR SURE.

I THOUGHT IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY IN CASE WE GET SEPARATED ON THIS JOB AND YOU NEED A FAST EXIT!

BONK

THE THOUGHT'S APPRECIATED!

DOES THIS MEAN YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TEACH ME HOW TO TRAVEL THE DIMENSIONS?

ZIP

BONKA-WAP-A-TONK-A-BOMP!

NOT NOW, I WON'T. WE'VE GOT A *WAR* TO FIGHT, REMEMBER?

GET YOUR TROOPS TOGETHER AND LET'S GO!

OKAY, OKAY! I'LL GET GLEEP AND--*WAIT!*

DID YOU SAY... *MY* TROOPS?

YOU HIRED'EM, YOU LEAD'EM! I'LL BE YOUR MILITARY ADVISOR, OF COURSE. BUT THE JOB OF *FEARLESS LEADER* IS ALL YOURS. YOU'RE THE COURT *MAGICIAN*, REMEMBER?

AND SO...

BACK TO KLAH.

WELL, HERE WE ARE. WE'RE LUCKY-- THE ARMY HASN'T STARTED TO MOVE OUT YET.

WELL, YOUNGSTER. WHERE'S MY FIRST BATCH OF TARGETS?

!?!

TWANG

WE'LL HAVE A FINAL PLANNING SESSION FIRST.

HAVING A GENUINE ARCHER ON OUR SIDE NATURALLY CALLS FOR SOME DRASTIC REVISIONS OF OUR ORIGINAL PLANS.

THAT DON'T BOTHER ME NONE. TA LET YA KNOW I WAS READY KEEP. TAKE YER TIME. SEEN TOO MESS UP 'CAUSE NOBODY BOTHERED PLANNIN'! IF YA DON'T MIND, I THINK I'LL TAKE ME A

JUST WANTED TA EARN MY MANY WARS TA DO ANY THOUGH, LITTLE NAP.

JES' HOLLER WHEN YA WANT SOME SHOOTIN' DONE.

NOW THERE'S A SEASONED SOLDIER. GETS HIS SLEEP WHEN AND WHERE HE CAN!

?

HEY, BOSS!

CAN WE DO A LITTLE SCOUTING?

THERE ARE A COUPLE OF THINGS WE NEED.

BUNT!

FIRST-- A BATTLEFIELD. SMALL WITH SCATTERED COVER. GUS, YOU CHECK THAT OUT. BROCKHURST, SEE WHAT YOU CAN BRING US ON THE THREE NEAREST ENCAMPMENTS, AND *STAY OUT OF SIGHT!* THE INFORMATION'S NO GOOD IF YOU DON'T COME BACK!

tweet tweet tweet tweet

C'MON, AAHZ! WHAT HAVE THEY GOT THAT CAN PUT A DENT IN *THIS* OLD ROCK?

ZZ ZZ

BAM!

KLUNK-KTA-KLUNK-KTA-

KLUNK-KTA-KLONK!

SEE?

ZZZZ

ZZZZ

TWANG!

FHA APPROVED

AJAX

F-FUNK!

NOW THAT WE'VE GOT A MINUTE, WHAT'S OUR FINAL PLAN? I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE PRELIMINARIES!

THAT'S EASY. WE DON'T HAVE ONE--YET. WE PROBABLY *WON'T* HAVE ONE UNTIL WE'RE ON THE BATTLEFIELD. UNTIL THEN, IT'S POINTLESS--TOO MANY VARIABLES.

ZZZZ

I *DO* HAVE A *GENERAL* IDEA OF WHAT WE'LL BE DOING.

IT WOULD BE NICE TO KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO *BEFORE* WE WANDER OUT ON THE BATTLEFIELD! IT WOULD DO A LOT FOR MY PEACE OF MIND!

WOULD YOU *MIND* SHARING IT WITH US? *WE'VE* GOT A STAKE IN THIS, TOO!

WELL, THE NAME OF THE GAME IS "DELAY AND DEMORALIZE."

THE WAY I FIGURE IT, WE AREN'T GOING TO OVERPOWER THEM. WE HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH GOING FOR US TO EVEN *TRY* THAT.

BUT DELAY AND DEMORALIZE WE *SHOULD* BE ABLE TO DO! WE'VE GOT *TWO BIG WEAPONS* GOING FOR US IN *THAT* KIND OF FIGHT!

AJAX AND GUS?

FEAR AND BUREAUCRACY!

HUH?

?

TANDA, MY GIRL! YOU'VE BEEN SPOILED BY YOUR SKYLARKING THROUGH THE DIMENSIONS! YOU'VE FORGOTTEN *HOW* THE MAN ON THE STREET THINKS! THE AVERAGE PERSON IN *ANY* DIMENSION DOESN'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT MAGIK--*OR* ITS LIMITATIONS.

IF THE KID HERE TELLS'EM HE CAN MAKE THE SUN STOP OR TREES GROW UPSIDE DOWN, THEY'LL BELIEVE HIM, ESPECIALLY IF HE'S GOT A FEW STRANGE CHARACTERS PARADING AROUND AS PROOF OF HIS POWER!

WHAT'S BUREAUCRACY?

RED TAPE--THE SYSTEM. THE ORGANIZATION TO GET THINGS DONE THAT *KEEPS* THINGS FROM *GETTING* DONE. IN *THIS* CASE, IT'S CALLED "CHAIN OF COMMAND".

AN ARMY THE SIZE OF THIS ONE HAS TO FUNCTION LIKE A WELL-OILED MACHINE OR IT STARTS TRIPPING OVER ITS OWN FEET.

IF WE TOSS A COUPLE OF HANDFULS OF SAND INTO THE GEARS, THEY'LL SPEND MORE TIME FIGHTING EACH OTHER THAN CHASING US!

UM... HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO ALL THIS?

I'LL KNOW BETTER AFTER YOU'VE HAD YOUR FIRST WAR COUNCIL.

AREN'T WE HAVING IT NOW?

NOT WITH *US*--WITH THE *ENEMY*!!

IN THE NEAR FUTURE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO SIT DOWN WITH ONE OF THEIR OFFICERS AND DECIDE HOW THIS WAR'S GOING TO BE FOUGHT.

MEZ

YOU ARE THE LEADER OF THE DEFENSES, REMEMBER?

POINT POINT POINT

IT'S PART OF THE JOB, HANDSOME!

WHY DON'T WE PUT OUR TRAINED ASSASSINS TO WORK! IF ENOUGH OFFICERS SUDDENLY TURN UP DEAD, THE ODDS ARE THE ARMY WILL FALL APART!

IT'S AGAINST THE RULES. WARS ARE FOUGHT BETWEEN TROOPS. KILLING OFF THE OFFICERS WITHOUT ENGAGING THE TROOPS GOES AGAINST TRADITION.

WELL, WHAT DO I SAY AT THE WAR COUNCIL?

HE'S RIGHT. ASSASSINS TAKE CONTRACTS ON INDIVIDUALS IN PERSONAL FEUDS, BUT NOT AGAINST THE GENERAL STAFF OF AN ARMY.

I'LL BRIEF YOU LATER. RIGHT NOW WE'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO.

WE PROBABLY WON'T HAVE TIME TO BREAK THEIR CODE, SO THE NEXT BEST THING IS TO *DISRUPT THEIR COMMUNICATIONS.*

TANDA, IN ALL THOSE SPECIAL EFFECTS, YOU FOUND AT THE BAZAAR, HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING WE CAN USE ON THE SIGNAL TOWERS?

I'M NOT SURE. I WISH YOU HAD SAID SOMETHING BEFORE I WENT SHOPPING!

DIGGA DIG DIGGA DIG

WHAT ABOUT AJAX?

DO YOU SEE THOSE TOWERS? UMM... CAN YOU USE YOUR BOW TO DISRUPT THEIR SIGNALS?

FHA APPROVED

AJAX

POKE PAT-PAT

ZZZ

WANG

ANYTHING ELSE?

FHA APPR

OUCH!!!

SPAZANG

EEEEAAA

FWOOMP!

COMMANDER CLAUDE

@#★☠⚡!!!

COMMANDER CLAUDE

UH, NOT JUST NOW! UH--GO BACK TO SLEEP!

FINE BY ME, SONNY. THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TARGETS TOMORROW. THAT FLAG I JUST CUT DOWN SAID THE ARMY'S FIXING TO MOVE OUT THEN!

YOU CAN READ THEM!?!

SURE, THERE'RE ONLY ABOUT EIGHT DIFFERENT CODES ARMIES USE, AND I KNOW'EM ALL!

AAHZ! AJAX CAN--

BAD NEWS, KID! BROCKHURST SAYS THE ARMY'S GOING TO MOVE OUT TOMORROW!

I KNOW! I JUST FOUND OUT FROM AJAX! CAN BROCKHURST READ THE SIGNAL FLAGS, TOO?

NAW, BUT THE GREMLIN CAN!

WHAT GREMLIN!?!

HE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO!

WELL, HANDSOME, I THINK WE JUST RAN OUT OF PLANNING TIME. BETTER CALL YOUR DRAGON-- WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET TOMORROW!

BuNG

WONK!

YOU GO GET THE DRAGON, TANDA-- THOUGH IT ESCAPES ME HOW HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE ANY HELP. THE "BOSS" HERE AND I HAVE TO DISCUSS TOMORROW'S WAR COUNCIL.

HEY!

Later~~

HEADS UP, KID-- I THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO HAVE COMPANY!

KID! YOU FORGOT YOUR DISGUISE!

PARTY PACHYDERM FAN CLUB

IT'S TOO LATE-- YOU'LL HAVE TO FAKE IT!

I'M SORRY, FOLKS, YOU'LL HAVE TO CLEAR THE AREA.

WE'LL BE MOVING SOON AND YOU'RE BLOCKING THE PATH.

CALL YOUR DUTY OFFICER!

MY WHOZ.

DUTY OFFICER, OFFICER OF THE DAY, COMMANDER-- WHOEVER'S IN CHARGE OF YOUR FORMATION.

HE'S A VERY BUSY MAN RIGHT NOW! WE'RE GETTING READY TO MOVE OUR TROOPS, MISTER, SO TAKE YOUR SON AND GET OUT OF THE WAY! IF YOU WANT TO WATCH THE SOLDIERS, YOU'LL HAVE TO FOLLOW ALONG AND DO IT WHEN WE CAMP TONIGHT.

I'M NOT HIS SON! I'M *SKEEVE!* MAGICIAN TO THE COURT OF POSSILTUM, PLEDGED TO THAT KINGDOM'S DEFENSES. NOW, I ADVISE YOU TO CALL YOUR OFFICER--OR DO YOU WANT TO WAKE UP TOMORROW MORNING ON A LILY PAD?

IS HE FOR REAL?

HOW'S YOUR TASTE FOR FLIES?

I'LL BRING THE COMMANDER!

WE DID IT!

ZING!

YEAH, KID. FOR THE TIME BEING, CONCENTRATE ON LOOKING ALOOF AND DIGNIFIED, OKAY?

I THOUGHT THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A *PEACEFUL* MEETING!

RELAX, KID.

AJAX IS COVERING US!

ZZZZZZ

I UNDERSTAND YOU GENTLEMEN ARE EMISSARIES OF POSSILTUM? FINE.

THEN AS THE FIRST REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EMPIRE TO CONTACT A REPRESENTATIVE OF POSSILTUM, I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF FORMALLY DECLARING WAR ON YOUR KINGDOM!

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

CLAUDE. WHY?

SURRENDER? TO A CRIPPLE AND A CHILD? EVEN IF I HAD THE *AUTHORITY* TO DO SUCH A THING, I WOULDN'T!

HISTORIANS LIKE DETAILS. WELL, CLAUDE, AS THE FIRST REPRESENTATIVE OF POSSILTUM TO MEET WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR EMPIRE IN TIMES OF WAR, IT IS OUR PLEASURE TO DEMAND YOUR UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER!

THAT'S RIGHT. WE SHOULD HAVE REALIZED. SOMEONE IN CHARGE OF A *SUPPLY COMPANY* WOULDN'T SWING THAT MUCH WEIGHT IN AN ARMY LIKE THIS, *WOULD* HE?

I HAVE *MORE* THAN ENOUGH AUTHORITY TO DEAL WITH YOU TWO!

AUTHORITY, MAYBE. BUT I FRANKLY DOUBT YOU HAVE THE *POWER* TO STAND AGAINST US!

VERY WELL! YOU'VE BEEN WARNED! WE'RE GOING TO BRING OUR WAGONS ACROSS THIS SPOT, AND IF YOU'RE ON IT WHEN WE GET HERE, YOU'VE GOT NO ONE TO BLAME BUT YOURSELVES!

ACCEPTED! SHALL WE SAY NOON TOMORROW?

TOMORROW? WHAT'S WRONG WITH RIGHT NOW?

COME, COME CLAUDE.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE FIRST ENGAGEMENT OF A NEW CAMPAIGN! SURELY YOU WANT TIME TO PLAN YOUR TACTICS?

TACTICS?

--AND TO PASS THE WORD TO YOUR SUPERIORS THAT YOU'RE LEADING THE OPENING GAMBIT?

GAMBIT?

AND TO SUMMON REINFORCEMENTS! UNLESS YOU WANT TO KEEP ALL THE GLORY FOR YOURSELF!

GLORY! YES! I-I DON'T BELIEVE WE'LL REQUIRE REINFORCEMENTS! IT WOULD BE *POINTLESS* TO INVOLVE TOO MANY OFFIC-- *SOLDIERS* IN A MINOR SKIRMISH!

CLAUDE, I CAN SEE YOURS IS A MILITARY MIND WITHOUT EQUAL. WIN OR LOSE, I LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING YOU AS AN OPPONENT!

AND YOU, SIR! SHALL WE SAY NOON THEN?

WE'LL BE THERE!

LATER...

PIECE OF CAKE! RIGHT, KID?

IS IT SET, BOSS?

WELL, I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED WHEN THEY STARTED TO REACH FOR THEIR SWORDS. I WOULD HAVE BEEN TERRIFIED IF I DIDN'T KNOW AJAX WAS--SAY, WHERE *IS* AJAX?

HE'S UP IN THAT CLUMP OF BUSHES. HE SHOULD BE BACK BY NOW.

ZZZZZZZZZ

AJAX!!

OH NO!

HEY! COME BACK!

THAT EVENING.

SKEEVE, CAN WE TALK?

IT'S ABOUT AJAX. I'M WORRIED. THE TEAM'S RIDING HIM ABOUT FALLING ASLEEP TODAY WHEN HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE COVERING YOU. HE'S TAKING IT PRETTY HARD.

I WASN'T TOO WILD ABOUT IT.

IF ANYTHING HAD GONE WRONG, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN CUT TO SHREDS WHILE PLACIDLY WAITING FOR OUR EXPERT BOWMAN TO INTERCEDE.

IN A WAY, I BLAME MYSELF. I VOUCHED FOR HIM. I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED HOW OLD HE IS. HE SHOULDN'T BE HERE, SKEEVE. YOU'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

ME? WHAT DO YOU WANT *ME* TO DO?

SEND HIM BACK. IT ISN'T FAIR TO YOU TO ENDANGER YOUR MISSION, AND IT ISN'T FAIR TO AJAX TO PUT HIM IN A SPOT LIKE THIS.

WHY TALK TO ME? *AAHZ* IS THE ONE YOU HAVE TO CONVINCE!

THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG. AAHZ ISN'T LEADING THE GROUP--*YOU* ARE!

I KNOW *AAHZ*--BETTER THAN YOU DO. HE'S A STICKLER FOR CHAIN OF COMMAND. IF HE SAYS YOU'RE THE LEADER--*YOU'RE THE LEADER*. BESIDES, THE OTHERS ARE COUNTING ON YOU, TOO. YOU HIRED 'EM. AS FAR AS THEY'RE CONCERNED, *YOU'RE* THE *BOSS!*

BECAUSE OF WHAT HE SAID BACK ON DEVA? C'MON, TANDA. YOU KNOW HE'S CALLED ALL THE SHOTS SO FAR.

AND YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME. YOU'VE GOT A WAR SCHEDULED TO START TOMORROW.

BOSS? ARE YOU BUSY? GUS AND ME AND THE GREMLIN WANT TO MAKE A SUGGESTION.

THE GREMLIN?

HE MUST HAVE STAYED BACK IN THE CAMP. BOSS, WE THINK YOU SHOULD PULL AJAX FROM THE TEAM. SEND HIM BACK TO DEVA. OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE.

HE'S A NICE OLD GUY, AND WE'D HATE TO SEE ANYTHING HAPPEN TO HIM.

OLD? THE GREMLIN SAYS HE'S TAILED HIM FOR MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED YEARS! HE SAYS AJAX WAS OLD WHEN THEIR PATHS FIRST CROSSED!

WHY IS THE GREMLIN FOLLOWING HIM, ANYWAY?

I TOLD YOU, KID, GREMLINS DON'T EXIST!

ABOUT AJAX-- I HEARD, AND FOR ONCE, I AGREE. MY ADVICE WOULD BE TO SEND HIM BACK. IF YOU WANT, GIVE HIM PARTIAL PAYMENT AND A GOOD RECOMMENDATION. BUT HE'S NO GOOD TO ANYONE THE WAY HE IS NOW.

EVENIN', YOUNGSTER! DIDN'T MEAN TA INTERRUPT YOUR MEETIN'!

WE-- UH-- WERE JUST TALKING--

YEAH, AND I KIN GUESS WHAT YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT!

WAL, I WAS GOIN' TO DO THIS PRIVATE-LIKE, BUT THE REST A' YA MIGHT AS WELL HEAR IT, TOO.

I RESIGN!

next issue → ★HEROES★ WON... DRAGONS TWO!